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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 004320

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KPAL](#) [EFIN](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: HOUSE STAFFDEL MEETS WITH KING ABDULLAH

REF: AMMAN 909

Classified By: CDA David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary. A staff delegation from the U.S. House of Representatives, accompanied by Charge, met with King Abdullah on May 29. The staffdel trip was hosted by the Government of Jordan, arranged by the Jordanian Embassy in Washington, and the Jordanian Foreign Ministry. Also present were Royal Court Minister Marwan Muasher, Minister of Finance Bassem Awadallah, and Rania Attalah, the King's communication director. The King told the staffdel that there must be a reconfirmation of the Quartet-led roadmap, and that there is, in his view, a two-year window for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state. On Iraq, the King stressed the importance of the upcoming December elections, and emphasized the role that moderates, like former Interim Prime Minister Allawi, must play in Iraq's future. The King expressed gratitude for U.S. support for Jordan, tying this support to the broader struggle to win over hearts and minds in the Arab world. End Summary.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

2. (C) King Abdullah told staffdel members on May 29 that he had recently spoken with Abu Mazen, and that he considered the Palestinian Authority President's visit to Washington to have been a success. The King spoke about the Palestinian/Israeli conflict with guarded optimism. He is glad to see the Gaza pullout proceeding on track, but said that there is a lack of clarity on how Gaza disengagement correlates to the roadmap. What is the next step after the Gaza pullout is complete, the King asked? He called for a reconfirmation of the roadmap that would get rid of the ambiguity surrounding the pullout, and stated that the future of the region hangs in the balance. The King said that there is a two-year window to achieve a viable Palestinian state. If this does not occur, the crisis will continue for decades., with serious implications for Jordan's stability and identity.

3. (U) The Palestinian issue also surfaced in the King's comments on the war on terror. He said that insurgent groups and terrorist organizations are using the plight of the Palestinian people as a recruiting tool. Progress on the peace process is needed in order to keep the Palestinian cause from being perverted into a rallying cry for terrorists.

4. (C) The King, echoed by Muasher, said that the U.S. needs to give real support to Abu Mazen. He welcomed the positive influence of the USD 50 million pledge to the P.A. President. Muasher stated that the U.S. needs to continue giving Abu Mazen the "tools" he needs to attain a moderate parliament that he can work with; he needs to be able to demonstrate the he and the moderates can make a difference in people's lives, to counter Hamas' influence.

5. (C) For his country's part, the King said that Jordan is engaging in civilian training programs for Palestinians, and stands ready to provide security training. Jordan has also renewed discussions with the PA and Israel regarding proposed deployment of the Palestinian Badr Brigade (ref) to the West Bank. In today's climate, the King argued, the "highly trained" Badr Brigade could be of use, policing of the West Bank in place of IDF soldiers or poorly equipped Palestinian Authority forces.

Iraq

6. (C) The King stressed the importance of the elections, anticipated to take place in December, 2005, and said that it should be a goal of the coalition to strengthen the "Allawis" -- i.e. the secular moderates willing to work across confessional divisions). He said that the GOJ has been hosting behind the scenes meetings with Iraqis to bolster Sunni support for moderate figures. Asked if he felt that the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq was a mistake, the King replied that he does not lament Saddam Hussein's demise. The King remarked that it was only a matter of time before Saddam would have come after Jordan, and that he needed to be

removed. However, he stated that mistakes were made in the aftermath of the war. He lamented the decision to disband all of the security forces and the emphasis on rapid de-Baathification. These two actions, in the King's estimation, had allowed the insurgency to swell and helped pave the way for the possible "Iranization" of Iraq.

Hearts and Minds

17. (C) The King said that thanks to U.S. support for the Jordan Education Initiative, Jordanian schools are now using a modern, moderate curriculum and are becoming a role model for the region. The First Lady shared this sentiment during her visit to Amman earlier in May. The King noted his appreciation for the assistance that his country receives from the U.S.. This support allows Jordan to move forward on the reform agenda, and enables the King to promote a moderate message. According to the King, the tangible manifestations of U.S. assistance also help to win over the hearts and minds of Jordanians and of the Arab world. The King said that he expects Jordan will need the same level of U.S. financial support through 2007 or 2008, but that the nation is approaching the point where it can stand on its own two feet. The King said that his country had a three-year plan to achieve this goal.

18. (C) In a side note, the King reconfirmed that he will push for parliamentary approval of an improved anti-money laundering law, particularly in the aftermath of the accusations directed against the Arab Bank's New York branch.
HALE